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U. S. Department of Agriculture

LEAFMOLD



THE BEST MATERIAL IN THE WORLD  
FOR HOLLY  
AND MANY NATIVE PLANTS

EARLE DILATUSH'S  
REAL FARM MARKET

ROUTE 25

ROBBINSVILLE N.J.









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# OAK LEAFMOLD



Oak Leafmold is the best rooting medium in the world for Holly and most other natives. Hemlock, Magnolia, Rhododendron, Laurel, Azalea, Leucothoe, Blueberries, Arbutus and native rock plants and ferns all like Oak Leafmold. The use of it as suggested here for Holly, applies to these plants also.

Seldom a day passes but someone asks of me, "What is the secret of your success with Holly?" There is no secret—make conditions natural for Holly and it is not hard to grow. In fact, it is easier to keep alive than many of our so-called hardy evergreens.

Holly (*Ilex opaca*) planted in Oak Leafmold will live and thrive in most of the Eastern United States. High altitude (in the Northern States) not latitude is the limiting factor. Hollies planted as stated here have gone through the record-breaking cold Winters of '34 and '35 and are now looking fine near Boston, Mass.; Wiscasset, Me.; Keene, N. H.; Lake Winnetoesaukee, N. H., and hundreds of other places where most people think it impossible to grow Hollies.

## Cannot Be Tamed

Remember, however, that Holly is wild; you cannot tame it. Our trouble with Holly has been that we have been trying to grow it as we grow other garden trees and plants. Holly and other natives are hardy enough but they are averse to most chemical fertilizers, clean cultivation and so forth.

I have always been glad I first started to grow Holly and other wild plants as a hobby, not as a commercial venture, as I spent years of hard work and much money before I learned how to successfully handle them. The first plants I transplanted were set out in our own woods. Father and mother would not be bothered with things such a little fellow wanted about the yard. There were more important flowers and trees. But some of those little trees, planted in such a crude way, are alive today, while hundreds of better, bigger plants on which I later spent much money and time, proved miserable failures.

## Born on a Farm

I have lived all my life on the farm where I was born. My father was a good farmer, but his greatest interest in life was in fertilizers. During my early childhood his bone mill on the farm was known to

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every farmer for miles around. There were no commercial fertilizers in those days, but manure, supplemented by ground bone from my father's mill, helped make this part of New Jersey known far and wide as the cream of farm lands. Cream Ridge, a nearby town, still remains to keep this fact alive in the memory of its citizens.

The happiest days of my childhood were spent in this mill. As I grew up, commercial fertilizers were developed and I helped mix by hand, hundreds of tons. When father died, he was president of a large fertilizer firm; my twin brother carries on in his place.

### Father's Faith in Fertilizers

My father believed in advertising and used much ground bone and later, commercial fertilizers, on the farm. The crops we grew helped no little to sell our fertilizers. My mother was in full accord with us. Few farm women could boast of such beautiful flowers around the yard and in the house. She always gave our fertilizer credit, but not fully warranted, because much of the material used in her pots, porch boxes, etc., was stump dirt, as she called it. This was rotted wood from stumps and logs together with rotted leaves. I used to get it for her as a child with a wheelbarrow little larger than a toy.

When I began growing Holly and other natives my greatest handicap was this experience with fertilizers and the belief I shared with my father that they would help any plant. The first few years were full of disappointments. I took time to bring in many natives when father thought I ought to have been in the cornfield or orchards. The fact that these became sickly looking as the months went by, did not make it easier for me.

### Learned by Experience

However, I persisted and learned as I went along. Time and again things happened that should have taught me that my mistake was in trying to tame these natives. For instance, Hollies planted around our ice house, where sawdust used for keeping ice was discarded every few years, were the first to grow really well. Since that time I have used over 2,000 tons of old Oak sawdust.

Finally, my father, who did not want me to use good cultivated farm land for Hollies, consented to my using, in one of the best of our fields, a portion that had been cleared only two years and on which a crop of corn had been poor—the ground was too sour. The whole field was plowed at one time and I planted the new portion in Hollies. It happened that some were put in the

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older ground. Before the year was over, the Hollies showed clearly the line where the old field ended and the results were the opposite of the corn crop.

This and many other things finally convinced me that I was working backward with Holly, one incident was the clinching argument. I had moved several hundred Hollies from a woods 40 miles away and had 90 more trees dug when the owner suddenly decided that my contract did not suit him and forbade my taking more from his property. I could not let the trees die, so I grouped them together on the north side of the woods and covered their roots with leafmold. This was in the Spring. In the Fall I felt I had to see those trees. Believe it or not, only three were dead and the remainder, although they had grown but little, looked better than the others I had planted.

### **Good Results Everywhere**

Years of work at home and the results obtained from hundreds of plantings made on nearby estates, together with the reports from persons who have bought Holly and planted it according to my directions in widely scattered sections of New Jersey, Pennsylvania, New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts and New Hampshire, prompt me to repeat without qualification that Oak Leafmold is the best medium in the world for Hollies.

Use plenty. Let the cost be your only guide, for you can hardly use too much. I am growing small Hollies in almost pure Oak Leafmold and their root system is wonderful. Collected Hollies, which many nurserymen feel never can be made to grow well have, on soil made up mostly of Oak Leafmold, grown roots in five years that compare favorably with the best any one can show.

A year or so ago a man who has a fine home in one of our New Jersey coast towns wrote, asking me to look at his Hollies. I found 22 magnificent old trees, which, as one of my men put it, showed their age. Rather timidly I suggested the use of Oak Leafmold with a little cottonseed meal and ground tobacco stems added; the trees were yellow and looked sick. The owner said, "I'll trust you" and we went to work. Recently I took a trip to see the trees, as I had had no report on their condition. The results were amazing—far beyond anything I had hoped for. The dark green foliage and red berries made a beautiful sight.

### **A Failure and the Cause**

At one time I was puzzled because persons who knew little about horticulture, brought back glowing reports on their Hollies, while others, who knew much more

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about growing things, told of different results with my natives. The wife of the president of one of our large department stores came to me several times for help with her Hollies, Rhododendron, and Laurel. Finally, I went over to see the stock. A glance showed that these plants had had wonderful care, yet, while alive, they were not growing. Near them were most beautiful roses and rare shrubs and trees from many countries. A glance around the immense estate showed that nothing had been spared to make every plant and tree do its best. The lady had bought good stock of me and had taken home a reasonable quantity of Oak Leafmold and planted according to instructions. Naturally she felt disappointed and told me so plainly. After looking things over, I could only suggest rather weakly, that Hollies and most of our wild things do best if not cultivated or fussed with too much.

In all my years I have only seen two women look "real mad." One was Mary Pickford in "Taming of the Shrew" and the other, the lady I have mentioned. I afterwards learned that the gardener had mixed with the soil and Oak Leafmold when planting these natives, a large quantity of ground bone and commercial fertilizer.

To all planters of Hollies, let me again emphasize that no lime, ground bone or chemical fertilizers be used in the soil. Also do not use aluminum sulphate, tannic acid or other chemicals. If you wish to sour the soil for Hollies (most soils around homes are too sweet) use an increased quantity of Oak Leafmold. The results will amaze you, more so if you have some knowledge of fertilizers and know what little fertility is in Oak Leafmold according to analysis.

I suspect that much of the good in Leafmold is due to its improving the mechanical or physical condition of the soil. Its greatest asset is that it works almost instantly. I have seen Hollies that have had Oak Leafmold put around their roots, darken in leaf in less than a week.

### Leafmold Differs from Peat Moss

I cannot express it in technical terms, but the real value of Oak Leafmold comes from its being "alive." We gather it from upland woods where it is from 4 to 10 inches thick with the top leaves only a few years old while the bottom layers have remained for decades. The whole mass comes in varying degrees of decomposition. But regardless of how long it has remained in the woods, it has been impregnated day by day with light and air. Every bushel of Oak Leafmold that is gathered from the floor of the woods has in it thou-

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sands of minute growing rootlets of plants and trees. The fact that this material has ripened in light and air cannot be over-emphasized.

In great contrast are the peat mosses and other forms of humus which, while they hold the moisture as does Oak Leafmold, cannot feed our plants because they are "locked." Lying for centuries without the benefit of light or air they develop a set condition that is very hard to break down. It is months after these are put in the ground before decomposition, so necessary to make conditions right for the bacteria, occurs.

I know from experience, that many people who love their plants will not be content to use Oak Leafmold alone. Even when their trees are growing fine they will want to put something richer around them. I insist that no commercial fertilizers or chemicals be used. But I have found that under certain conditions, especially where the soil is very poor, the following compost will work wonders: To every ton made up of two parts of Oak Leafmold and one part of well rotted cow manure, add 400 pounds of cottonseed meal and 200 pounds of crushed tobacco stems. If your ground is very sour, hardwood ashes can be used in place of tobacco stems.

Try Oak Leafmold, or the above compost which is more than half Oak Leafmold, against any other fertilizer and you will agree with me that Oak Leafmold is the best material in the world for Hollies and most of our other native trees and shrubs.

EARLE DILATUSH.

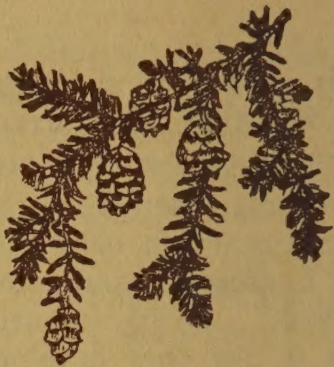
Robbinsville, N. J.

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HOLLY



HEMLOCK



RHODODENDRON



BLUE BERRY



SWAMP MAGNOLIA



ANDROMEDA



FERN



MOCCASIN FLOWER

A FEW OF THE MANY NATIVE PLANTS THAT LIKE  
OAK LEAFMOLD

